

The Gardeners' Club

Santa Cruz County, California

December 2013

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Annual Holiday Potluck & White Elephant Silent Auction



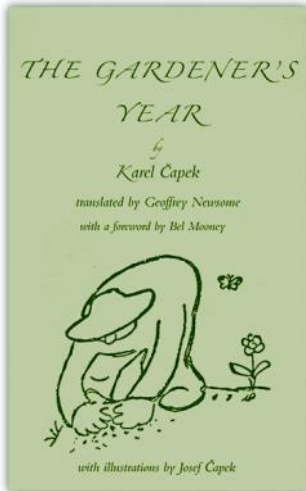
It's that time of year when we gather, not to trade plants or hear a speaker, but instead to celebrate our gardening friendships. And, bonus time—December is when the White Elephants visit. I've been saving up treasures all year for some of you to take home and give a new home. What special something will YOU bring that one of us MUST have?

First we'll have sumptuous potluck dinner. Bring a dish to share, labeled for the benefit of our vegetarian/vegan members or those with dietary restrictions. Please bring a serving utensil, and if you have hot dish, have it already heated. We'll provide plates, utensils and beverages.

After good eats and grand conversation, the liveliest part of our meeting will start. We'll browse the silent auction tables and discover items we didn't know we needed, and find perfect gifts for family and friends (and maybe ourselves). In the past, we've had all kinds of marvelous things, including jewelry, special plants, clothing, gardening items, good things to eat, books, chotzkes, antiques, crafty things—every year there is something new! We'll have cards available for you to put with your items with a one-line description and minimum bid.

Brings your friends, especially those who might be interested in joining our club, and family or significant others. We won't have the plant sale or business meeting.

Thursday, December 14th, 7:00 pm
Aptos Grange, 2555 Mar Vista Dr., Aptos



Every once in a while, I have to revisit one of my favorite old gardening books for some humor and perspective. From the internationally acclaimed Czech writer Karel Capek, The Gardener's Year is a beautifully written and marvelously apt account of the trials and tribulations of the gardeners life. First published in Prague in 1929, the book combines a richly comic portrait of life in the garden, narrated month by month, with delightful illustrations by the authors brother and

collaborator, Josef Capek. Below is some of what he observes about the gardener in December (his Czech garden, alas, is covered in snow).

The Gardener's December

...Well, then, make a fire in my room; let the garden sleep under its eiderdown of snow. It is good to think of other things as well; the table is full of books which we have not read, let's do that; we have so many other plans and cares, let's make a beginning. But have we covered up everything well with brushwood: Have we wrapped up tritonia? Haven't we forgotten to cover the plumbago? Kalmia ought to be protected by a branch; what if azalea gets frozen? What if the tubers of the Asiatic ranunculus don't come up next year? In that case we shall paint instead...wait...Wait a bit, let's look through some catalogues.

So in December the garden is mostly found in a great number of garden catalogues. The gardener himself hibernates under glass in a heated room, buried up to the neck, not in manure or brushwood, but in garden catalogues and circulars, books and pamphlets, in which he reads:

1. That the most valuable, gratifying, and altogether indispensable plants are those which he has not got in his garden.
2. That all he has is "rather delicate", and is "inclined to get frozen"; or that he planted side by side one plant "which requires moisture", and another "which must be protected against damp"; that the one which he planted with special care in the open sunshine requires "full shade", and vice versa;
3. That three hundred and seventy, or more, kinds of plants exist which "deserve better attention", and "ought not to be left out of any garden", or which are at least "perfectly new and surprising varieties, surpassing by far all previous ones".

Conscious of all that the gardener becomes very



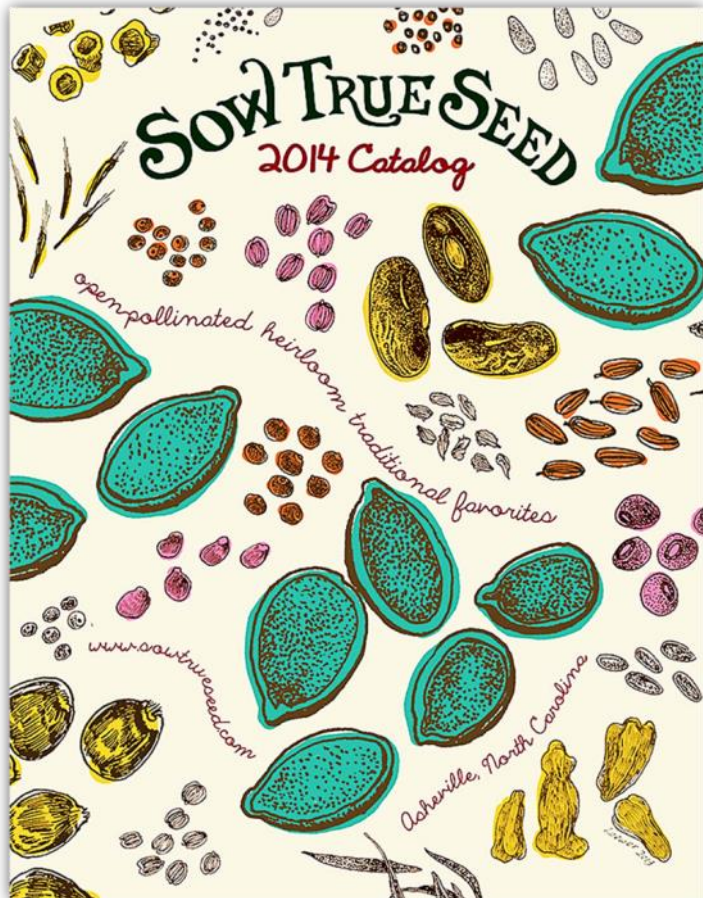
melancholy in December; first he begins to be frightened that in spring not one of his plants will come up because of frost or fungi, moisture, drought, sunshine, and lack of sunshine; he racks his brains, therefore, how to fill up these terrible gaps.

Secondly, he finds that even if very few die, he will have hardly any of those "most valuable, profusely flowering, entirely new, and unsurpassed" varieties of which he has just read in sixty catalogues; this is indeed an intolerable blank which must be filled up somehow. Then the hibernating gardener ceases entirely to be interested in what he has got in his garden, being fully occupied with what he has not, which of course is far more; he throws himself eagerly upon catalogues, and ticks off what he must order, which, by Jove, must no longer be lacking in his garden. In the first rush he marks off four hundred and ninety perennials which he must order at all costs; after counting them he is a bit subdued, and with a bleeding heart he begins to cross off those which he will give up for this year. This painful elimination must be gone through five times at least, until only about one hundred and twenty "most beautiful, gratifying, indispensable" perennials remain which—on the wings of an anticipated joy—he immediately orders. "Send them at the beginning of March!" - Lord, if only it were March already! He thinks in feverish impatience.

But God has blinded him; in March he discovers that with the utmost difficulty he can find not more than two or three places in his garden where it is possible to plant anything, and even those are near the hedge behind the bushes of Japanese quinces...

The gardening catalogs that tempted Capek in the last article were no doubt much different than the catalogs that entice us today. There are a couple that deserve special mention in this issue. They are both more than catalogs, and are definitely plant-activist oriented (that is, anti-GMO seeds, pro-heirloom and organic plants).

How could you not order this catalog—the beauty of the cover alone provides gardening motivation and spirit.



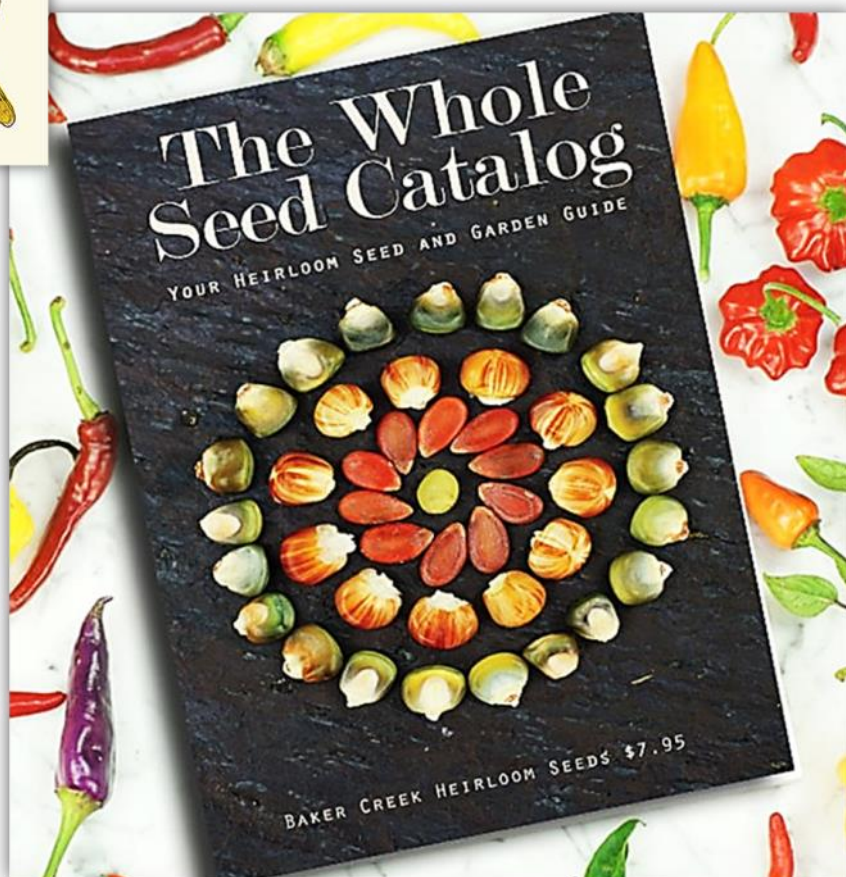
For their annual catalog Sow True Seed collaborates with a local artist. For this cover seeds were hand drawn by Peter Loewer, an honored botanical illustrator and author who has written over thirty books on gardening and natural history. Color and composition by Sarah Rudisill, a graphic designer with over 20 years of experience in visual communication.

"This isn't just a list of seeds - it's growing guide and gardening inspiration rolled into one!" says Carol Koury, Sow True Seed's founder. "At events people always ask, 'Are these free?', and are surprised when we say YES!"

The 2014 Sow True Seed catalog is at the printers, the first run will be ready for send-out by mid-December. Get yours by signing up at www.sowtrueseed.com! While you are there, you can also sign up for their newsletter.

Sow True Seed was founded in 2009 to serve home gardeners, market growers and the seed saving community at large. The company seeks to promote and foster community sustainability by helping to preserve our shared botanical heritage and seed a new era of sustainable culture and ecological wisdom. "I grew up eating food that had been grown for me by my grandma, who saved her seeds so she could plant next year," says Koury. "We want sustainable regional agriculture, and every sustainable regional agriculture needs a seed company to hold it together."

And then, bestill my heart, there is The Whole Seed Catalog from Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds. This special publication is a new addition that is sure to delight gardeners, foodies and historians everywhere. It is part catalog, plus so much more! Housed within its pages are the histories of rare seed varieties, anecdotes about growers, fresh garden recipes, preserving, organic tips, growing methods and an all around guide to living off the land. This publication is in addition to their popular, full-color Heirloom Gardener magazine which is published quarterly and is available by subscription and on newsstands. It is also in addition to their original, [Free Baker Creek Seed Book](http://www.baker-creek-seeds.com) which has become a favorite catalog among gardeners. This one has 356 pages! Over 1500 varieties of heirloom seeds! It has amazing stories in it—so much human interest, history, gorgeous photos, not to mention recipes that will make you drool. It is \$7.95, and worth every cent. <http://www.rareseeds.com/the-whole-seed-catalog/>



This is the last call for you to finish planting your spring bulbs now. Dream about spring-flowering beauties (daffodils, tulips, crocuses, and hyacinths and more).

Here's a great holiday gift idea: seeds from your garden! I love project—buy clear open-able plastic ornaments from your local craft shop or on line - - and fill them with seeds. These can be hung from a tree or used to decorate a gift package. Here's a picture of some from a great Pinterest site, [http://](http://www.pinterest.com/annelizabeth31/create-with-nature/)



www.pinterest.com/annelizabeth31/create-with-nature/, which features crafts made from materials found in nature. I also love this idea: napkin rings made from rosemary sprigs! How simple and elegant!



If you have ornamental grasses in your garden, you'll appreciate them now for their winter beauty. Not only are they beautiful against a dark winter sky, they also serve as a protective habitat for animals. Don't prune them back yet – do it later, before spring breaks.

If needed, apply horticultural oil as a dormant application on fruit and



December Gardening

ornamental trees and shrubs. This smothers any potential insects that want to overwinter. Make sure to apply the oil only when you're sure there will be no frost for the next 24 hours.

Remember to take care of the birds—provide fresh water and keep feeders stocked.. Consider adding English holly to your garden—the berries are loved by wildlife. The glossy dark green leaves are beautiful all year.

Speaking of berries, this is the season I greatly admire one of my favorite native plants, *Symphoricarpos albus* or Common Snowberry. It is a branched shrub 2-5 ft. tall, which can gradually form a thicket 4-6 ft. wide. The slender, wiry twigs bear small, opposite leaves and inconspicuous flower clusters (tiny, pinkish-white, bell-shaped flowers) followed by large, snow white berries which are show stoppers. This plant was once popular in old-fashioned dooryard gardens. The berries remind me of popcorn! The dense twiggy stems can sucker to form a low upright thickening plant. Tolerant of nutrient-poor, heavy, or alkaline soils, the adaptable snowberry bears fruits most heavily in full sun, but accepts partial shade. Prune back older plants in late winter to allow them to rejuvenate. You can use this in a naturalized planting, perhaps in a mixed border with vigorous companions.



Add large colorful blooms to your landscape in our coldest months by planting winter blooming camellias (*Camellia sasanqua*). These evergreen shrubs have attractive deep green foliage and are easy to grow. Their care and culture is the same as that of rhododendrons. They prefer well drained soil in the winter months and evenly moist soil in the summer. Partial sun conditions are ideal for all camellias and sasanqua types will also grow well in full sun locations.

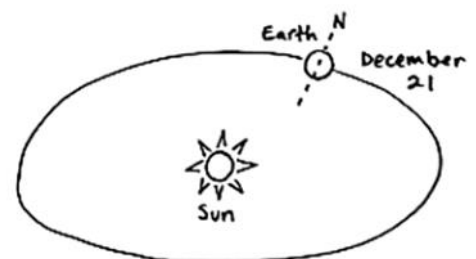
Camellia 'Yuletide', featuring cherry red blooms with golden yellow centers, is a favorite. An extra cold-hardy camellia is 'Winter's Snowman', which has pink buds that open to white anemone formed flowers. Foliage is dark green with burgundy new growth in spring.



Here's another beauty: 'Hana Jiman', large single form flowers with white petals edged cerise pink, surrounding yellow stamens.



A joyous Winter Solstice to you all!



The Gardeners' Club Membership

The time has come for membership renewal. Annual membership dues, which include all benefits, are still only \$12.00, due by is January 1st. The membership year lasts through the end of December, 2013. Dues entitle members to all club educational programs , our special events, plant trades and our awesome monthly newsletter. The "green" option is to receive an electronic PDF **FULL-COLOR** version of the newsletter by checking the newsletter e-mail option below.



Ours is a club celebrating the joys of gardening, friendship, community, learning, nature and growth. Renew your membership now so you won't miss a thing...you'll be glad you did.

And...with gift-giving season here, consider sharing your passion for gardening, and supporting our club, by giving your favorite gardening enthusiast an opportunity to connect, share and learn with us. A gift membership is a gift nobody will want to return!

Come grow with us!

Your Membership

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address _____ Email: _____

Newsletter Preference (check one): ☐ Full color PDF via e-mail ☐ Paper copy (B&W) via snail mail

Gift Membership

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address _____ Email: _____

Newsletter Preference (check one): ☐ Full color PDF via e-mail ☐ Paper copy (B&W) via snail mail

Enclose check for \$12 per member made out to *The Gardeners' Club* . Mail to
The Gardeners' Club c/o Suzanne Mercado, P.O. Box 3025, Ben Lomond CA 95005

Holiday Open House & Poinsettia Sale

Wednesday, December 4th

3:00 to 6:00 pm

At the Cabrillo College Environmental Horticulture Center Greenhouses
Room 5300, "Top of the Campus"

Amazing display and sale of student-grown poinsettias of many colors and varieties. Houseplants and succulents available, too. Treats and something warm to drink! For more information about the Cabrillo Horticulture program, its facilities, and a map, go to www.cabrillo.edu/academics/horticulture or call 479-6241.



Illus.: Elizabeth Gordon's Flower Children

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www.thegardenersclub.org



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It's easy-peasy to
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are \$12 per calendar
year. Make check to
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